Against the Grain

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Issues in Vendor/Library Relations -- Google

Editor

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Nevada," by **Rick Anderson** and **Steven D. Zink** *[Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services 27 (2003) 61-71]* — for a very compelling case. How risky is it really to assume that subscriptions mostly work? How much does check-in cost? What else could check-in staff be doing? Every library should consider this for newspapers, weekly magazines, and anything that will be purchased again on microfilm — i.e., high-volume, low-price, low-risk titles.

4. "Stop binding journals:" In **Rick Anderson's** words, "binding older issues of print journals is, with rare exceptions, a matter of providing excellent protection to materials that need little, if any, protection." At the **University of Nevada**, "the vast majority of older print journal and magazine issues are now housed in plastic boxes in the main stacks." This approach seems to satisfy patrons, and virtually eliminates the time spent seeking missing issues, adjusting location, holdings and check-in records, not to mention the actual cost of binding. Staff hours freed by this are redirected to link and holdings maintenance for higher-demand e-journals. Remember, this approach needn't be adopted for all titles in order to realize savings.

Our "just say no" approach is meant to stimulate thought and short-term action, but it's also aimed at a long-term goal: keeping libraries cost-effective and relevant to their users and sponsoring institutions. All too often, academic libraries use the spectre of "long-term consequences" as an excuse for avoiding or deferring difficult decisions. Granted, for instance, the archiving problem is not fully solved. Does this mean that every library has to retain, check-in, and bind all its print journals — even if the hours dedicated to those tasks limit patron access to the electronic versions?

We're not in favor of corporations ruling the world. But a bottom line does impose a discipline from which many libraries can benefit. Recognizing that every choice has a cost can help clarify priorities. Like corporations, or even **Michael Moore**, libraries cannot simply continue to grow, absorbing more tasks and resources. They must be managed, which sometimes means "just saying no." While a long-range view offers much of value, it must be balanced against economic and practical limits. The organization must adapt. Setting priorities means some things will no longer be done. We believe those priorities should be set consciously, and in light of patron demand. Any "consideration of long-term consequences" should include hard questions about which tasks offer the most value to patrons now.

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No self-respecting librarian would be caught dead today, of course, only using the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. But, if you can find a set in your local Reference Department and if you can carry off a few volumes to a secluded corner of the room, it's easy to conduct an interesting little piece of research.

Try to find the earliest entry for "**Google**." Which volume to choose? While by now it's become all but impossible to imagine life without everyone's favorite search engine, it's also hard so much as to remember the world prior to **Google**. How *did* we look things up in those days? Well, back to the question, which days? How about ten years ago, 1995? No, way too early. That was the year **Google** founders **Larry Page** and **Sergey Brin** met one another, as graduate students at **Stanford**. 1997? Warm, but still no sign of **Google**, which didn't launch until the year after.

Not until 1999, a mere six years ago, did the *Readers' Guide* need to create the subject heading, "**GOOGLE** (INTERNET SEARCH ENGINE)." That 1999 volume indexed all of two articles, one in *Forbes*, one in *Fortune*. The *Forbes* article, entitled "!&#$%.com," asked if there were "any more exasperating experience than trying to search for something on the Web?" It indicted the all-too-literal **AltaVista** and a few of the other extant search engines. But "promising new software offers a bit of hope," said *Forbes*, whose reporter described three new search engines. Two of them, "Direct Hit" and "Clever," in the end proved not enough of either.

The third was **Google**. The 2000 *Readers' Guide* volume indexed ten articles—a quintupled literature—featured a new subject heading, "**GOOGLE, INC.**," and unveiled even a **Google** subheading, "Securities." By 2004, the year of **Google's** IPO, which brought in $1.7 billion—a good thing, that "Securities" subheading—the monthly paperbound volumes listed more articles than any annual cumulation had indexed to that point. Tracing the trajectory of **Google**: that's a job for the *Readers' Guide*. Don't try it in **Google** (where, in case you're interested, a search under "**Google**" returns over 243,000,000 results).

It took no time to put some of that new capital to work. The most audacious **Google** ideas, it turned out, had to do with libraries. In November was the announcement of "**Google Scholar**," a super-index to scholarly literature. Then, one month later, in an expansion of the "**Google Print**" program begun earlier—where **Google** results display excerpts from certain in-print books—the company announced a library digitization project on a scale that in pre-**Google** times, meaning just a little while ago, would have been unimaginable. Five of the world's leading research libraries—**Stanford**, **Michigan**, **Harvard**, **Oxford's Bodleian**, and **New York Public Library**—announced plans to work with **Google** to digitize their collections; for **Stanford** and **Michigan**, their *entire* collections, in- and out-of-print, about 15 million volumes between them. Digitization was nothing new to these libraries, but the **Google** scale was new. **Michigan**, for example, a pioneer, had on its own been digitizing fewer than 10,000 volumes per year. **Google** planned to digitize everything the library had, in just seven years.

The national press took up the story. Reporters interviewed librarians. The library press worked overtime. The news was manna to listservs and blogs, which carried all sorts of speculation on what **Google** would mean for the future of books and their publishers, of libraries and their users and non-users, of vendors and their customers, of just about everyone.

In January, when the **American Library Association** met in Boston, each of the U.S. libraries working with **Google** gave a brief report about their own site at a long-standing

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meeting officially known as "Chief Collection Development Officers of Large Research Libraries," but in real life always called "Big Heads." This regular Saturday morning session, never known as a headline-maker, was a good show indeed this time, the first public forum in the profession since the **Google** news broke. "Be nice to your undergraduates," advised **Mark Sandler**, representing **Michigan**, alma mater of **Larry Page**, "you never know when they might succeed."

Big Heads is usually the most collegial of groups, but in Boston Hethe **Google** libraries said there were some things they were not free to talk about. It was like a Congressional hearing, as if they'd brought counsel. The many unanswered copyright questions, sure to keep law firms occupied for many years, accounted for some of the secretiveness. But each of the five partners of **Google**, as well, has its own financial deal, its own operational plans, and its own ideas, as yet not fully formed, on how in the years ahead to make best use of the bibliographic, technological, and intellectual windfall with which they've been blessed. They are partners with **Google**, not with one another. **Google's** ultimate plans, for that matter, remain unclear too.

Matching these moments of non-disclosure on the part of the **Google** libraries were one or two slightly sour comments from non-participants. To be fair, on a number of fronts at this point it's no sure thing that **Google's** plan will succeed at all. A good summary of maybe why not can be found in a *Library Journal* interview with **Alice Prochaska**, University Librarian at **Yale**, which was not among the libraries approached by **Google**. **Prochaska** raised questions about the risk of damaging books in such a mass digitization project, on metadata standards, on the level of duplication among the parallel projects, and on the randomness of such a vast digital collection versus digital content selected and packaged for users. But on one front at least, **Prochaska** verified that the project is already an unqualified success. "If I had a regret," she told *LJ*, "it is that we missed out on the publicity."

Yale was not alone in public doubt. **American Library Association** president-elect **Michael Gorman**, most notably, compared **Google** hits to fast food, and said that the "**Google** phenomenon is a wonderfully modern manifestation of the triumph of hope and boosterism over reality." In a story that played everywhere, **Jacques Chirac**, president of France, proposed a European challenge to **Google Print**, one that would curb the "omnigooglisation" of the world, as another French official put it, and give students an alternative to **Googling** their way in English through, say, the French Revolution, an example chosen by the director of France's national library.

One didn't need to be president of anything, of course, in order to dissent from **Google's** vision. A representative online comment referred to a "Faustian bargain." Library collections in the past, this critic argued, "have served as their own advertisement, but now they will become a vehicle for selling something else." Much of the commentary, on the other hand, was quite positive, if a little wonder-struck at the boldness and scale of **Google Print**. "I think what **Google** are undertaking in this program is truly fantastic!" one blogger recorded. "To have all that information available through **Google** will really bring information that would be otherwise unobtainable to the masses."

The idea of a universal library is far from a new one, but the dream always came mixed with a good dose of sci-fi. More than that, *librarians* were supposed to be in charge of the universal library, weren't they? Now, from nowhere, there's a plausible model resembling the universal library and who's running things but a pair of 30-something grad-school entrepreneurs who set out to organize all of the world's information and knew that meant making a deal with librarians. The academic library, in all its history never ranked among society's bolder institutions, is suddenly a partner with an organization recognized by everyone as a marvel of capitalist innovation.

But, the truly remarkable thing is that when capitalists finally took note of libraries, what they noticed wasn't their hi-tech apparatus, but their books, printed books. And they wanted *old* books, the ones in remote storage, many of them still classified in **Dewey** or in some homemade pre-**LC** system, the ones dusted off every decade or two and borrowed less often than that, the forgotten books, problematic in every way, to some librarians their most unloved belongings, almost an embarrassment. If *these* books can find a suitor like **Google**, and capture the world's imagination—who knows?—one day perhaps even the *Readers' Guide* will make a comeback.

Technology Left Behind — Where Have All the Catalogers Gone?

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Recent announcements of job openings at libraries at colleges and universities across the country demonstrate a growing trend in the cataloging field, the creation of metadata-related positions and an emphasis on metadata schemas other than **MARC**. Libraries of all shapes and sizes are creating new positions with varying degrees of emphasis on metadata duties.

Wanting to find out a little more about the duties of a Metadata Librarian and the impetus for creating a metadata position, I interviewed several professionals in the field, including librarians at **Princeton University**, the **University of Tennessee**, the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology**, and the **University of Virginia**.

The Metadata Librarian position at the **Princeton University Library** was created in 2003 as part of an initiative to get more involved in digital libraries. It was the first position to be filled in the newly formed Digital Initiatives department (*http://diglib. princeton.edu/*). Since then a digital photographer, a Web designer, and a programmer have all been added to the department. Digital Initiatives has focused its efforts on rare and antiquarian books and materials in **Princeton's Special Collections**, and recently the department launched the prototype of **Princeton's** digital library.

Hired in March 2003, **Clay Redding's** duties as Metadata Librarian are varied, involving generating metadata, correlating the metadata to objects, and constructing the back end architecture of the database. Other tasks include management of the **Princeton Library's** link resolver and manipulation of **MARC** and **XML** data. Lately **Redding** has focused his efforts on the creation of forms and finding other ways to automate the various tasks involved in creating the digital library.

While his position reports to the Head of Technical Services, **Redding** works in close conjunction with the Systems department. He feels his job duties are more systems and programming related than most other metadata related positions. As a consequence, **Redding** founded the metadataLibrarians listserv (*http://metadatalibrarians.monarchos.com*) as a resource for professionals in variety of fields dealing with metadata issues and a way to personally keep abreast of the field.

The **University of Tennessee Libraries (UT)** created the **Digital Library Center (DLC)** in 2001 to "foster the creation and use of digitized collections and provide open access to materials of interest to the academic community." (*http://diglib.lib.utk.edu/dlc/aboutus.html*). Examples of the types of projects the **DLC** has taken on include collections of photographs of the Tennessee River Valley and early images of Egypt (*http://diglib.lib.utk.edu/dlc/projects.html*).

The Metadata Librarian position at **UT** was created a little over three years ago to support the efforts of the **DLC**. The current Metadata Librarian, **Arwen Hutt**, manages the Digital Access unit, a division of Technical Services. The unit is responsible for scanning and digitizing materials, metadata design, and production for the **DLC** projects. **Hutt** describes her level of involvement in the local digital projects as "ranging from responsibility for all metadata and digital production to a more advisory role, determining standards and workflow and conducting training." In addition to working with the **DLC**, she also advises other university and community projects on metadata and digitization issues.

According to **JoAnne Deeken**, Head of Technical Services at the **UT Libraries**, the goal from the very beginning was to integrate the **DLC** into the library as a whole, rather than emphasizing it as a separate unit. The Digital Access unit works closely with **MARC** catalogers, especially when it is necessary to map one metadata standard to another.

Several years ago the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)** began **OpenCourseWare (OCW)**, a unique initiative with the ambitious goal of making all of the course materials from **MIT** classes available to students and educators throughout the world. The project "is a large-scale, Web-based electronic publishing initiative funded jointly by the **William** and **Flora**

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